DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 953 PS 027 956

AUTHOR Landsverk, Ruth Anne
TITLE Families, Schools, Communities: Learning Together, Spring 1999. Bulletin 99217.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin State Dept. of Public Instruction, Madison.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 25p.; For Fall 1998 bulletin, see ED 424 942.
AVAILABLE FROM Families in Education Program, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI; Tel: 800-441-4563 (Toll Free); Tel: 608-266-9757l.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Involvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Family Programs; *Family School Relationship; *Parent Participation; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Program Evaluation; *School Community Relationship; World Wide Web
IDENTIFIERS Child Care Resource Centers; Family Resource and Support Programs; Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

The Families in Education Program, dedicated to nurturing a family-community-school partnership, provides this packet for Wisconsin schools to use throughout the year to promote families and learning. The articles in this packet contain ideas for making family-community partnerships work in the schools. Articles address the following topics: (1) family-school compacts; (2) web resources on parental involvement in education; (3) questions for evaluating a family-school-community partnership program; (4) family resource centers; (5) sample survey for school family centers; (6) child care information center; (7) parent involvement in school governance; (8) setting standards for parent partnerships; (9) promising practices for partnerships, including a summer learning fair and a family involvement retreat; and (10) the variety of ways schools spent their 1997-98 Wisconsin Partnership Schools grants. (KB)

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Families • Schools • Communities

Learning Together

Spring 1999

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Coordinator
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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

This publication is available from the

Families in Education Program
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(800) 441-4563

Bulletin No. 99217

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Printed on
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Table of Contents

Foreword 1

Agreeing to Work Together, Harder 2
Two Family-School Compacts:
Webster-Stanley Elementary (Oshkosh) School Compact
Keller Elementary (Green Bay) Parent-School Agreement

Web Resources on Parental Involvement in Education 4
By Mary M. Chaffee, Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center Consortium, Region VI

Checklist of Questions to Help Evaluate Your Family-School-Community Partnership Program 7

Family Resource Centers 8
Places to Build on Family and Community Strengths
By Barbara Anderson, CChildren's Trust Fund

Gathering a Room Full of Voices 10
A Sample Survey for Use of School Family Centers

Care-in-the-Know 12
Lita Haddell, Child Care Information Clearinghouse Center

Parents Bring a Distinctive Voice to School Governance 14

How Well Are We Doing? 15
Setting High Standards for Parent Partnerships

A Spring Trio of Promising Partnership Practices 17

Partnership Potluck 19
1997-98 Partnership Schools Link to Student Learning

Acknowledgments

This publication was produced with the assistance of the following individuals from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: Neldine Nichols, formatter and graphic artist; Jane Grinde, editor; Victoria Horn, cover art; and Steve Kretzmann, program assistant.

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Foreword

We, in education, have always asked a lot of parents, but have we asked enough? Let's face it. We already have their hearts. The children who fill our classrooms bring their parents' hearts to school with them each day. We are also quite good at asking for parents' hands—the hands that do innumerable volunteer tasks in school and at home.

Have we, however, been good enough about engaging parents' *minds* on behalf of children and learning? I'm talking about informing parents, asking them to consider school issues and give us their opinions, then doing something with the information we have gained. Whether it is about the state academic standards and all of the changes made over the last year or two in student testing, the curriculum, or professional development, let us always welcome parents' questions. Let us always give parents the opportunity to ask, "What does it mean?" "How does it support other learning goals and structures in place?" "How can I make sure my child is learning what he or she is supposed to be learning?" "What can I do to help?"

This issue of *Learning Together* attempts to offer parents and school staff some ideas for engaging parents' minds as advisors, obtaining their support as their children's first and most influential teachers, and furnishing families with additional sources of information on the Web. You will also find stories about how other schools are involving families and a sample parent survey for your family center.

Thank you for working to help embrace each child in a "seamless web of learning" at home, in school, and in the community. We hope you enjoy *Learning Together*, a series of booklets published twice annually by the department.

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

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Agreeing to Work Together, Harder

Two Family-School Compacts

Webster Stanley Elementary School, Oshkosh, and Keller Elementary School, Green Bay, worked with students, parents, and staff to create the agreements on the next two pages. Each school took a different path and came up with a slightly different focus, but both recognize the important role families play as partners in the education of children. These compacts are examples only, because the process of developing these compacts has to be done locally with families and staff working together.

1998-99 Webster Stanley Elementary School Compact

We acknowledge that for our children to be truly successful, parents/guardians, students, teachers/staff, and administrators must form a team that works for the benefit of our students. These promises are voluntary commitments made by individuals to themselves and to others.

AS A STUDENT...

I agree to be a responsible learner by:

- being a good role model for others by following the school rules and helping others.
- being responsible for my own actions at school and home.
- being positive, respectful, and kind toward myself and others and our learning environment.
- working as hard as I can to complete my work on time and with quality.

Student Goal: _____

_____

Student's Signature: _____

AS A PARENT/CARING-ADULT...

I agree to be responsible for my child's education in the following ways.

- I will help my child prepare for a successful school day by:
  - ❑ providing healthy food and plenty of rest,
  - ❑ getting my child to school on time, and
  - ❑ dressing my child in appropriate clothes.
- I will create a positive environment about learning at home by:
  - ❑ limiting time spent watching TV and playing video games,
  - ❑ selecting age-appropriate TV programs/movies and discussing them with my child,
  - ❑ providing a quiet place and time for homework, and
  - ❑ reading to and with my child on a daily basis.
- I will become active in the school community by:
  - ❑ communicating and working as partners with my child's teachers regarding concerns, needs, and student progress,
  - ❑ attending parent conferences,
  - ❑ attending at least one PTO meeting, and
  - ❑ volunteering to assist with school activities/projects.
- I will educate myself in the following area: _____

_____

Adult Goal: _____

_____

Adult Signature: _____

AS A STAFF PERSON...

(Teacher, Support Staff, or Administrator)

I agree to:

- assist in developing lifelong learners by encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- communicate with parents about classroom expectations and their child's activity, behavior, and progress.
- provide a safe and positive learning environment in which to build self-esteem and academic knowledge.
- respect all forms of diversity of students and their families.
- offer a variety of ways for families to be partners in their child's learning.

Staff Goal: _____

_____

_____

Staff Signature: _____

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Parent-School Agreement
Keller Elementary School, Green Bay

At Keller School we create a safe and positive learning environment based on high expectations. Research has proven that students whose parents are involved in their child's education are more apt to be self-sufficient, confident, and successful adults. We need you as Keller parents to be partners in your child's education. Parent-teacher conferences are a great way to start being involved. We are asking you to select two or more of the following areas in which you would like to participate:

- ❑ **P.A.C.T. (Parents and Children Together with Teachers):** An organization of parents, teachers, and administrators who meet once a month to organize fund-raisers and school events, and make decisions regarding the P.A.C.T. budget.
- ❑ **School-Based Learning Council:** Staff and parents identify annual learning goals and action plans to address these goals.
- ❑ **Special Presentations** *(teaching)*: An opportunity to teach your craft or skill or conduct a career presentation.
- ❑ **Activities Coordinator:** Organize field trips, work with School Assembly Committee, organize volunteers, work with area businesses, etc.

PLEASE NOTE: One initiative this year—district-wide and at Keller—is to increase parental involvement in the above areas. In particular, PACT and the School-Based Learning Council are in dire need of additional participants. Please consider participating in these and/or other areas.

Helping out in your child's classroom or with school activities. *(Please check boxes)*

- ❑ Field Trips
- ❑ Tutoring
- ❑ School Store
- ❑ Student Council
- ❑ Library
- ❑ Computer Lab
- ❑ Aide Room (helping prepare student learning materials)
- ❑ Materials (cutting, pasting, assembly at home)

School Family Nights *(Please check boxes)*

- ❑ Ice Cream Social ..... TBA
- ❑ Holiday Ornament ..... December 17
- ❑ Family Reading Night ..... TBA
- ❑ Easter Egg Hunt ..... April 1
- ❑ Halloween Fun Night ..... October 22
- ❑ Science Fair ..... April 29
- ❑ Multicultural Friends Festival ..... November 24
- ❑ Keller Carnival ..... May 13
- ❑ Holiday Workshop ..... December 5

Additional activities to be announced.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Student Name: _____

Best time of day for me to work with Keller students is: *(circle one)* A.M. P.M.

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Web Resources on Parental Involvement in Education

By Mary M. Chaffee, Research and Outreach Specialist, Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center Consortium, Region VI

There are many perspectives from which to view parental involvement—as a parent, educator, researcher, practitioner, etc. We have tried to include web sites which are well-organized, resourceful, and offer a variety of these perspectives. In some instances, links to specific articles on parental involvement are highlighted rather than the web site itself. For a more comprehensive listing of some of the numerous resources available on this topic, we urge you to visit the Comprehensive Center VI (CCVI) on-line resource library at: http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/ccvi/.

"The ABCs of Parent Involvement in Education: Preparing Your Child for a Lifetime of Success"
http://www.ed.gov/G2K/community/

This article compiles practical information on parental involvement in education from the National Parents' Day Coalition and affiliates. For information on obtaining a copy, look under the *Community Update* section. Click on Number 57, May 1998 (number 4 in the Table of Contents). Then, under the Table of Contents, click on "Announcements." You might also want to click on the article entitled "Education Leaders Use Technology to Get Parents Involved In Education."

"Beyond Culture: Communicating with Asian American Children and Families"
http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig94.html

This digest, from the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education*, is written by Gary Huang, Teachers College, Columbia University. It explores the complexities of communication with Asian and Pacific Islander (API) children and their families through describing the overt and covert dimensions of the various API cultures and through discussing API's socioeconomic background and life experiences that affect their communication behavior. The goal is to help practitioners improve communication with APIs and thus more effectively educate API children.

"Building a Successful Parent Center in an Urban School"
http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig90.html

This digest (Digest Number 90, May 1993), from the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education*, is written by Larry Yates, Teachers College, Columbia University. It presents the principles and practices of vital and ongoing parent centers.

"The Challenges of Parent Involvement Research"
http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig134.html

This digest, from the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education*, speaks of the window of opportunity for improving programs and practice through high-quality research that the current national policy agenda—making parents' involvement in their children's education a national priority—has created. It briefly reviews findings from parent involvement research to date, discusses their validity and utility, and proposes critical questions for future researchers in the field to consider. The authors are Amy J. L. Baker and Laura M. Soden, National Council of Jewish Women Center for the Child.

Children First
The Web Site of the National PTA
http://www.pta.org/index.stm

Children First is a well-developed, easy-to-navigate web site. It contains information on the National PTA, legislative activity, program areas, chats and bulletin boards, and links. Information is also available on a wide variety of topics, including parenting skills, leadership development, HIV/AIDS education, and parent and family involvement in education. To navigate to the information on parent and family involvement, click on *Program Areas* on the home page, then click on *Education Programs*. In this section, subtitled *Programs and Publications*, extensive information is provided on parental involvement in education for both parents and teachers. See, especially, the section on "Parent and Family Involvement Programs."

The Children's Partnership
http://www.childrenspartnership.org

Among the publications available on this web site are two useful guides for parents concerning the use of the Internet by children: "The Parents' Guide to the Information Superhighway: Rules and Tools for Families On-line" (May 1998) and "Tips and Tools for Parents: Keeping Kids Safe Online" (December 1997). The former is found on the home page. To find the latter, click on the *Contents* button on the home page, then, under the *Resources* section, click on "Safety Tip Sheet for Parents."

"Critical Issues in Parent and Family Involvement" from *Pathways to School Improvement*
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/

Pathways to School Improvement, found on the *North Central Regional Educational Laboratory* (NCREL) web

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site, offers an extensive and in-depth section on *Parent and Family Involvement*. The two "Critical Issues in Parent and Family Involvement" highlighted in this section offer academic reviews on the issues with hyperlinks to relevant articles and other resources. It is well worth exploring.

Education Week on the Web: Parental Involvement
http://www.edweek.org/context/topics/parent.htm
This site is well-organized and contains a wealth of information. By clicking on the *In Context* button on the home page and then the *Issues* button, you are provided a long list of issues. Scroll down to *Parental Involvement*. This background essay on *Parental Involvement* covers a glossary of terms, an extensive list of relevant articles found in the *Education Week* and *Teacher Education* archives, additional articles found on the Web, a background reading list, and links to other *Related Organizations* on the web. Check it out!

Family Education Network
http://familyeducation.com/
Family Education Network is a user-friendly site. It offers browsers, especially parents of school-age children, the tools and resources to get answers regarding the education of children, how to help each other (i.e., parent to parent), and how to save time in the process. You can search by state for education resources as well as by school age group.

Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches
http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/
This idea book, found on the U.S. Department of Education's web site, addresses the importance of family involvement in education and effective approaches to encouraging families to participate in local schools. It can be downloaded in portable document form.

Forward in the Fifth
http://www.fif.org/
Forward in the Fifth is a web site with a community flavor to it. The section on *Parent Involvement* offers ideas and suggestions in a bullet format geared primarily towards parents and teachers. Especially useful as a stepping stone to other resources on the web is "Parent Involvement-Parent Links."

Hand in Hand: How Nine Urban Schools Work with Families and Community Services. 1995.
http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/Hand/
This book provides support for educators, parents, and community representatives working to integrate social services in their schools. Nine urban schools report on how they worked with families and community agencies to address problems they were experiencing in their classrooms and how, in their efforts to support students' academic progress, they found ways to help stabilize students' families and attend to students' emotional and affective progress. It is published by the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands.

"How Does Your School Measure Up?"
Council for Basic Education
http://www.c-b-e.org/articles/howdoes.htm
The web site of the Council for Basic Education (CBE) offers a revised version of a checklist, "How Does Your School Measure Up?", published by CBE in 1980, that helps parents analyze the quality of their child's school. The focus is on parental involvement and the premise that good schools welcome it.

"Increasing Parental Involvement: A Key to Student Achievement" by Dan Jesse
http://www.mcrel.org/products/noteworthy/danj.html
Found on the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) web site, Dan Jesse's article, "Increasing Parental Involvement: A Key to Student Achievement," offers an excellent overview on how to overcome the barriers to and increase the quality of parent involvement.

"Increasing the School Involvement of Hispanic Parents"
http://eric-Web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig80.html
The digest, from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, is written by Morton Inger, ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. It addresses the crucial issue of how to engage family members of Hispanic children in school activities.

"Parents Place"
http://www.educationminnesota.org/
Found on the web site coproduced by the Minnesota Education Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers is a section written by teachers for parents. Starting with the premise that parents are a child's first teachers, it offers an interesting array of resources and ideas to parents on how to become involved in their children's academic accomplishments.

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Kids Online

http://www.kidsonline.org/

This site not only provides background information on the December 1997 *Internet Online Summit: Focus on Children* that addressed ways to assure that steps are taken to make the Internet Online experience safe, educational, and entertaining for children, but also includes links to several major initiatives that developed as a result of the summit. These links include *America Links Up*, announcing the "Internet Teach-In" (a broad-based public awareness campaign to ensure that every child in America has a safe, educational, and rewarding experience on-line) and *A Parents' Guide to the Internet*, found on the U.S. Department of Education's web site. In addition, take a look at the *Resources for Parents* section found on this site.

"Mathematics for Parents"

http://www/wcer/wisc/edu/MIMS/Parent_Newsletters/

Available from the *Wisconsin Center for Education Research* web site, the "Mathematics for Parents" newsletter was provided to classroom teachers to be sent home with children during the school year. The newsletter was designed as an extension of the Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) program, which informs teachers about how primary-grade children think about simple arithmetic and space (e.g., shape, measure, depiction, and navigation). The newsletter aims at informing parents about how their children think about mathematics, just as CGI aims at informing teachers.

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)

http://www.ncpie.org/

This web site is nicely laid out and also provides a text-only version. The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) is dedicated to developing effective family/school partnerships throughout America. It offers guidelines to schools and school districts for *Developing Family/School Partnerships*. In addition, the section on *Resources* offers a vast array of diverse web sites. Each site is written up and relevant resources highlighted.

National Parent Information Network

http://npin.org/

The *National Parent Information Network* (NPIN) is a wonderful resource web site. The purpose of NPIN, a project sponsored by two ERIC Clearinghouses: the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education* and the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Secondary Education*, is to provide information to parents and those who work with parents and to foster the exchange of parenting materials. Be sure to look at *Resources*— "For Parents" and "Working With Parents."

Parent Training and Information

http://www.sounddata.com/pti/

Parent Training and Information is a web site dedicated to providing information and training to parents of exceptional children through the use of local parent training and information projects throughout the U.S. It provides a useful directory of parent training that includes links to the *South Dakota Parent Connection*, the *Minnesota Pacer Center*, the *North Dakota Pathfinder Center*, and, in Wisconsin, *The Parent Education Project*.

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education

http://www.ed.gov/PFIE/index.html

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (PFIE) is a creative site that allows visitors to navigate the site from their perspective of choice. The site seeks to promote children's learning through the development of family-school-community partnerships. It provides a good overview of the latest federal programs and initiatives funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Within the section entitled *Resources and Programs* under *Federal Programs* can be found a useful list of "Parent Information and Resource Centers."

Running in Place: How American Families Are Faring in a Changing Economy and an Individualistic Society

by Nicholas Zill and Christine Winquist Nord

http://www/kidscampaigns.org/Whoseside/Parenting/ripcontents.html

The Kids Campaign web site is excellent. Published on the site are excerpts from a study entitled *Running in Place*, written by psychologist Nicholas Zill and demographer Christine Winquist Nord. It is based on the findings of the National Household Education Survey of 1993 and state and local statistics. Of particular interest is section 3, "Maintaining Parental Control as Children Get Older," which specifically pertains to parental involvement in education. Check it out!

Strong Families, Strong Schools

http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/strong/

This web site, prepared by the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education* and the *National Parent Information Network*, provides a review of new research findings on the importance of family involvement in children's learning, model programs, and suggested roles for family members. It is well worth visiting!

This article is adapted from one that appeared in the CC-VI Forum *in Fall 1998, the newsletter of the Comprehensive Center Region VI, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

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Checklist of Questions to Help Evaluate Your Family-School-Community Partnership Program

The following checklist is a tool to help schools and districts recognize the strengths of their family-school-community efforts, as well as areas that may need attention. Originally developed for members of the Wisconsin Partnership Schools Network, it reflects the components of a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships and can help any school or district reflect upon three questions of vital importance for planting and growing strong partnerships:

1. What did we do?
2. What worked and what didn't work?
3. What will we do next?

Action Team

- Are these groups represented on your action team: parents and grandparents, teachers and other staff, school administration, senior citizens, business community (including local health care and social service agencies), higher education (such as UW Extension Family Living Agent), or community-at-large?
- Does your action team include a number of parents and grandparents—not just one—who represent all kinds of families your students are from?
- If a separate group, is your action team linked to school improvement or student achievement efforts in some way?
- If not a separate group, is your team examining how the issues it deals with connect to partnerships and student learning?

The Six Types of Partnerships

- Does your school consider *each type* of partnership (parenting and family skills, two-way communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and community outreach) in goals and activities for the year, or does it base partnerships heavily on one area only, such as volunteering?
- Do your partnership activities and events connect to and advance your team's goals?
- How much are parents invited and encouraged to participate in deciding what partnership goals will be and how activities will be carried out?
- Where do your partnership plans allow for parents to communicate their needs and desires? For example, through conversation with school staff and other parents, phone or written surveys, presentations to committees, or gathering of anecdotal information?
- How does your overall action plan invite *all* parents to help their children learn, no matter what their economic or individual circumstance?
- How are families encouraged to meet, learn, mentor, and support *each other* in your plans and activities?

Budget for Partnerships

- Is your partnerships budget adequate?
- Does the expenditure of partnership monies effectively support the goals of your action team?
- How does your school supplement its budget for partnership planning and activities by using a variety of school funding sources, such as Title I, AODA, Goals 2000, Title VI, IASA, Title VII-Bilingual/ESL, state GPR, and Carl Perkins (including FAST and SAGE)?
- Do some of the fund-raising and volunteer efforts of local parent-teacher groups, civic organizations, and businesses support partnerships?

Partnership Coordination

Who is responsible for acting as a point of coordination and communication of partnership plans and activities?

- Is the responsible person or committee also connected to your action team or to another body involved with improving student learning?
- Do families have direct access to your partnership coordinator, action team, or partnership committee to express their needs and concerns?
- Is time allocated for this person or group to network with state and national efforts connected to partnerships, attend statewide conferences and community meetings, or participate in outreach efforts beyond your school building or district?

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Family Resource Centers

Places to Build on Family and Community Strengths

By Barbara Anderson, Communications Director
Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund

All Families Are Welcome

Families are the cornerstone of the healthy growth and development of Wisconsin's children. Family resource centers provide effective services and support systems to emphasize family strengths and build on them.

Recognizing that all parents need help from time to time, but that not all families need the same kind or intensity of support, family resource centers have developed a wide range of services to meet the individual needs of each community.

Family resource centers promote and strengthen ties among families in the community, connecting families with each other to reduce isolation and increasing informal support systems. Family resource centers work in partnership with many community agencies, including schools, to help families succeed.

Family Resource Centers Working in Partnership with Schools

Family resource center programs and services are available to all families from the time a child is born and provide an ideal place for parents and children to start preparing for school. By focusing early on developing strong healthy families, children start school better prepared to learn and succeed.

Current research suggests that the first three years of a child's life present the most significant time to optimize brain development. Family resource centers offer parents and caregivers learning and support opportunities that help facilitate a young child's development.

Group-based services such as parent education courses, workshops, and support groups help parents learn strategies to promote optimal child development, including the importance of talking and reading to children right from birth, building consistent nurturing relationships, and practicing appropriate behavior management techniques.

Drop-in programs and play-groups give parents and children an opportunity to play together. These hands-on learning programs for parents and children help develop young brains and moms' and dads' confidence in parenting.

Family resource centers also provide individual services for families that may include one-on-one coaching on positive parenting skills; toy, book, and parenting resource loan libraries; and "telephone warmlines" to answer parents' questions.

Family resource centers provide information on helping parents and children transition into school. Centers often host early childhood development screening programs and other events that help parents and children meet school staff and other community professionals.

Family resource centers may even be located in schools, giving moms and dads a unique opportunity to get involved in school activities before their child is enrolled. This is important, because research suggests that parents who get involved early with their child's school are more likely to stay involved in later years.

Family resource center community resource referral and follow-up services offer a reliable link to public and private agencies and provide strong family advocacy within communities, helping families learn to access community resources as needed.

More Information about Family Resource Centers

If you would like to learn how to contact the family resource center nearest you or how to start a family resource center in your community, call the Children's Trust Fund at 608-266-6871 or visit us on the internet at wctf.state.wi.us.

Children's Trust Fund Family Resource Centers

Douglas County Family Resource Center
1418 Tower Avenue
Superior, WI 54880
Phone: (715) 392-5677
E-mail: jmarlow@cpinternet.com

Early Childhood Family Enhancement Center
2202 South Park Sreet, #700
Madison, WI 53713
Phone: (608) 256-7799
E-mail: None

The Family Center of Washington County
684 South Indiana Avenue
West Bend, WI 53095
Phone: (414) 338-9461
E-mail: None

The Family Center
5555 West Capitol Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53216
Phone: (414) 449-8685
E-mail: elvira@family.ywcaogm.org

The Family Center
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La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 784-8125
E-mail: frclax@centuryinter.net

Family Resource Center
1508 West. Sixth Street
Racine, WI 53404
Phone: (414) 635-7070
E-mail: None

The Family Resource Center
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Wausau, WI 54401
Phone: (715) 845-6747
E-mail: csswfrc@execpc.com

La Causa Family Resource Center
809 West Greenfield Avenue, P.O. Box 04188
Milwaukee, WI 53204
Phone: (414) 647-5971
E-mail: maureen@aero.net

Northwoods Family Resource Center
1108 Lake Avenue, West
Ladysmith, WI 54848
Phone: (715) 532-6459
E-mail: None

Silver Spring Family Resource Center
5460 North 64th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53218
Phone: (414) 463-7950, ext. 40
E-mail: None

The Family Center of Florence County
612 Lake Street, P.O. Box 17
Florence, WI 54121
Phone: (715) 528-5566
E-mail: fcfamily@netnet.net

River Source Family Center
403 High Street, P.O. Box 52
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
Phone: (715) 720 1841
E-mail: rivsourc@discover-net.net

Fort Howard and Jefferson Neighborhood Family Resource Center
520 Dousman Street
Green Bay, WI 54303
Phone: (920) 448-2256
E-mail: fthoward@netnet.net

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Gathering a Room Full of Voices

A Sample Survey for Use of School Family Centers

More and more Wisconsin schools are discovering that finding space is only the first step to establish a successful family center in their buildings. Even more challenging may be keeping the family center open, staffed, and well-used by families, community members, and school staff as a place of welcome, learning, and accomplishment.

School family centers that function well don't just happen. They are the result of a communications process that began much earlier among the school, families, and the surrounding community. Many schools begin the search to answer important questions about the school family center by gathering information on the educational and social needs of parents and students—what parents believe the school and other community resources might be able to do for them and their children.

A planning group could be convened to decide the kind of information needed and compose the survey questions. A school-family-community partnership team, a site council, or another school improvement team made up of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members might be the logical choice to create and conduct the surveys.

The following sample survey is aimed at parents—first, at finding out if they think a family center is a good idea, and second, at discovering how they think the school and family center might be able to help them address concerns related to their children's learning or other issues. Most schools send surveys home with students and, through a combination of incentives and pleas from teachers and other school staff, encourage students to return completed forms to school.

Following this survey of families, another survey might ask families how they can contribute to the life of the school and larger community. A survey of the community might later be conducted to find out what resources are available for families. It seems simple, but the best way to find out what people think is to ask them.

Sample Message to Families to Accompany the Survey

A Message to all Parents of _____ School

From the Principal, Staff, and Parent Organization of _____ School

In an effort to help all families feel a sense of ownership in and belonging to _____ School, we are considering creating a family center in the school. The center will be a place where parents, grandparents, and other family members can feel welcome to come any time of day—before and after school—to meet with the principal, teachers, or other parents; volunteer for school projects; find out what kinds of services are available in the school and community; or participate in school and community events and programs.

YOUR ANSWERS ARE VERY IMPORTANT! This survey will help us find out if parents think a family center is a good idea and how they think it should be used.

Please fill out this survey and ask your child to return it to his or her teacher by _____.

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Family Center Survey

1. Would you be in favor of this school creating a family center? *(Check one)*

   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Maybe

2. What kinds of issues would you like to see resources in the family center address? *(Check as many as you wish)*

   ❑ communicating with your child's teacher(s)
   ❑ helping your child learn at home
   ❑ student discipline in school
   ❑ student safety
   ❑ the role of parents in school decision-making
   ❑ transportation to and from school
   ❑ the school curriculum
   ❑ homework
   ❑ television watching
   ❑ alcohol and drug abuse prevention
   ❑ child development
   ❑ parenting
   ❑ gender equity
   ❑ family nutrition
   ❑ neighborhood gangs
   ❑ child neglect and abuse
   ❑ opportunities to volunteer
   ❑ community issues (i.e., hunger, poverty, housing, or diversity)
   ❑ English as a Second Language classes
   ❑ adult literacy classes
   ❑ GED classes (earning a high school equivalency diploma)

3. When would you be able to use the family center?

   ❑ weekday evenings
   ❑ weekends
   ❑ during the school day
   ❑ other times: _____

4. Do you know of other individuals or school or community groups that could benefit from using the space or resources of the family center?

Name of group or business: _____

_____

Name of individual or contact person: _____

_____

Telephone: _____

17

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The Wisconsin Child Care Information Center: Care-in-the-Know

By Lita Kate Haddal, Wisconsin Child Care Information Center, Office of Child Care, Division of Economic Support, Department of Workforce Development

Expectation vs. Reality

Remember how you looked forward to finally having your newborn to yourself? Hospital staff, family members, neighbors, and friends had cluttered your free access to that bundle, and you yearned to hold your baby privately and simply savor the wonder of it all.

Child care providers have similar feelings about the children they care for. So many regulations to comply with, paperwork, coursework, site preparation! Then, finally, they get to take in the kids! They look forward to lots of laughter and hugs.

Now remember your first night alone with the sole responsibility for your little one and how "alone" no longer felt so good. Suddenly you were "homesick" for the hospital and the care **you** received. Caregivers, too, go through that "left high-and-dry" feeling when the reality of their responsibility—the noise, jealousy, tears, messes, feedings—set in. They feel overwhelmed and need reassuring that they are doing a vital job by caring for children and the families that go with them.

Help is at Hand

The Wisconsin Child Care Information Center (CCIC) is a special library that cares for caregivers. Like a friendly neighbor, we are ready to lend a helping hand. Our helping hand fills hands—with information and materials to help child caregivers become better equipped to nurture Wisconsin's children.

Our collection is directed toward child care providers and early childhood educators, one link beyond parents in a child's chain of supervision, although most of our materials are of universal relevance to anyone dealing with children. Most of our clients are unseen and contact us by phone or mail. CCIC is a library you can go to in your PJ's and slippers.

The state Office of Child Care created this centralized information clearinghouse in 1985. Our goal is the same now as it was then: to help meet the ongoing training needs of Wisconsin's child care providers and to heighten parents' awareness of their role in assuring quality care for their children. This "Care-in-the-Know" mission of knowledgeable child care and knowledgeable parenting occurs through individualized matching of resources to client. If we don't know answer options to a question or are not able to refer a client to someone who does, we make it our business to find answers.

Materials are varied. Books, videotapes, and audiocassettes comprise the lending collection. Housed in the Department of Public Instruction's Reference and Loan Library, CCIC also has access to thousands of journal articles and books through library Internet services. Many people prefer to receive photocopies of articles or brochures on topics that they wish to keep or share with parents.

The impressive collection is constantly growing as it serves multiple levels of the population. Like a spiral curriculum, core child care knowledge areas are repeatedly visited in our quarterly newsletters, which function as catalogues for readers to learn about our latest resource purchases. Because each newsletter revolves around a single topic, they work well for workshop planners selecting resources.

Affordable Services

The most exciting part of this project is that all of our services are free. No membership is required; no dues need to be paid. The only cost to our clients is the return postage, at library rate, of borrowed materials. Your tax dollars foot the bill with a bang for your bucks!

Our services are affordable, physically and intellectually accessible, and reliable. By gleaning the best and most appropriate information available and sending the materials to clients' homes and worksites, we become "personal shoppers" when it comes to collecting information about child care issues. We individualize our selection of materials to suit client needs and capacities.

Much of what we distribute is designed to assist new child care providers as they set up their programs. Often, students seek our services, looking for quality information for their presentations and reports.

Continuing Requirements

We recognize that the practicing caregiver is also a parent educator, and that seasoned providers, too, have need for support and stimulation. Licensed and certified providers and center staff are required to participate in continuing education; five hours of these annual 15-25 hours of training may be obtained by viewing our videos or reading our books. Once a partnership has been forged, we have established a line through which we can send regular transfusions of quality information to child care

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workers. In turn, we find out what these child care partners are becoming experts in and can refer these same people to each other for assistance.

What's New

Our regularly updated calendar of education and training events for child care and early education professionals also assists providers in obtaining continuing education and gives the whole state an overview of trends, who and where the movers and shakers are, and sometimes just the impetus to participate. We have a web site, too, where we try to put up-to-date materials, linkages to other resources, and the calendar of training events at the fingertips of computer-using clients.

Caring for caregivers means saving them time to get the job done, saving them money, treating them with respect, recognizing their ability to grow in wisdom, and encouraging them to develop their skills. "Care-in-the-Know" is our mandate: helping Wisconsin's caregivers and parents to be "in-the-know" when caring for children and families. Call CCIC at 1-800-362-7353 or visit our web site at: http://www.state.wi.us/dlcl/rll/ccicind.html.

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Parents Bring a Distinctive Voice to School Governance

Why take the time and effort to involve parents in school decision-making and governance? Because, many researchers believe, it is critically important to school improvement.

Don Davies, founder of the Institute for Responsive Education, a Boston education organization that promotes family and community involvement in schools, points to several reasons parents are needed in any school or district decision-making process:

- Parents know things about their own child and other children that affect the decisions school districts make.
- Parents carry the "parent view" of what schools are doing and what they should be doing. This perspective needs to be included in the decision-making process.
- Parents give the process credibility, which is important politically. Their presence gives decisions additional strength beyond what the principal or the superintendent or the school board says.
- Parents bring the perspective of their own segment of the community, whether that means Haitian immigrant mothers or upper-middle-class fathers or something else. This diversity of views is often missed.

This broad community representation ensures that decisions are in the hands of people who are diverse by race, class, job, or function—a group that is as representative of the interests of all children as possible. This does not always guarantee perfect decisions and a tidy process, says Davies. "But I believe it makes it more likely that the group will make more interesting and better, child-centered choices."

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How Well Are We Doing?

Setting High Standards for Parent Partnerships

By Anne Henderson, Karen Jones, and Beverly Raimondo

Even the strongest school reform legislation can't make a difference without parent involvement. Beyond a doubt, the research shows that involving parents improves student achievement. Yet, few schools engage parents as real partners in school improvement, and many district reform efforts fail to take parents seriously.

How can schools engage parents in real school reform? A 1997 report by Anne Henderson, *Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform*, describes how eight schools in poor neighborhoods raised student achievement to high levels by engaging parents in school reform. They did it by working closely with their families. In these schools, parents sit on governing councils, take part in standards committees, and analyze school data. They also help write school policy, assess student portfolios, and prod district and state officials for more resources.

Following, are standards that parent advocates in the state of Kentucky have developed to help parents design and carry out projects advancing school reform in their communities. Each project must be designed to improve student achievement, involve more parents, and have a lasting impact. The standards can also be a useful self-assessment tool for Wisconsin schools and districts seeking meaningful parent involvement. Take a few minutes to review them. How does your school or district stack up?

How do the Project Standards Work?

1. Will the project improve student achievement? Projects should try to improve conditions that lead to low grades and test scores and raise student achievement. For example, why write a school handbook if many students' families may be unable to read it? Each project must address these questions:

- *Is the project based on real data or information* about student achievement in your school or district? Does it meet a real need? How do you know?
- *Does the project aim to improve the quality of student work?* Will you and others be looking at student work to see if the project has an impact? How will you do this? What impact will this have?
- *Does the project refer to high academic standards?* How will it promote understanding of higher standards in the school community? How will it help parents, teachers, and students tell if students are working at a high level?
- *Why will the project improve student achievement?* Is the link between the project activities and improved student achievement clear and direct? How will it improve student learning? Why do you think so?

2. Will the project increase parent involvement? It's important to go beyond the parents who are always involved. Questions such as these must be addressed:

- *Will you engage all types of parents in the school community?* Will you be working with parents who are not involved? Are there parents who will not be reached by the project? Why? Who are they?
- *Will at least one-third of the families in the school be involved?* Will you be involving the parents who can have an impact on the problem your project is addressing?
- *How will you reach out to the families you want to include?* Do you think your approach will work? Why?

3. Will the project have a lasting impact? Often, projects tend to be one-time events, such as an open house, a reading night, a family fun fair, a science exhibit. What kind of effect do you want to have? Consider these questions:

- *Will the project activities extend at least two years?* If not, will they have an impact that will last after the activities are done?
- *If your project is an event, will it happen at least three times during the school year?* Will there be activities between the events? Will key people in the school community be involved (e.g., PTA, custodial staff, principal, student group, school council)?
- *Will the project become part of standard practice in the school?* Could it easily be adopted by the school? Will it be part of the school improvement plan?

Evaluating Parent Partnership Projects

To help family members, school staff, and community people think about these questions, we have developed a scoring guide, based on four levels of performance: novice (beginner), apprentice (starting to learn), proficient (learning well), and distinguished (at the highest level).

To evaluate your school or district partnership efforts or projects, first think about a project that is already underway. Bring a few people together to talk about how it's going. Place a check by the statements in the scoring guide that you think best answer the questions in the first column. To be proficient or distinguished, all but one or

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two checks should fall in those columns. This scoring process should result in an interesting discussion.

Now think about a project being planned. Which statements best describe how the project is being designed? Use the statements in the guide as tips for increasing the project's impact. Almost any project can have a positive effect on how well our kids do in school if it pays attention to these three standards. What could be more important?

Excerpted from the article, ***The Power of Parent Partnership****, published in the April 1999 edition of* ***Our Children****, the National PTA magazine. Anne Henderson is author or coauthor of many books and other materials about family and community involvement in education, available from the Center for Law and Education, Washington, DC. Karen Jones is president of the Kentucky PTA, and Beverly Raimondo is founder and director of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, a citizens' advocacy group in Kentucky.*

Parent Involvement Project Scoring Guide

Standard	Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
1. Is the project focused on improving student achievement?	I. Project is based on at least three sources of data or information (e.g., state test scores, school improvement plan, school survey).	I. Project is based on at least two sources of information or data.	I. Project is based on some information, but not very thorough.	I. Project is based on scanty or vague information.
	II. Parents, teachers, and students will look at a wide range of student work.	II. Some parents and teachers will look at student work in one or two subjects in a few grades.	II. Looking at student work is not a main feature of the project.	II. Looking at student work is not a priority.
	III. Project will help people understand how standards are used in the classroom and whether student work meets standards.	III. Project will show how standards are reflected in student work.	III. The link to standards is not clear.	III. Project does not refer to standards.
	IV. Project design is clearly linked to improving student achievement.	IV. The design may have an impact on student achievement.	IV. The case for how the project will improve student achievement is not clear.	IV. Project is not designed to improve student achievement.
2. Will the project increase parent involvement?	I. All types of families in the community will be reached.	I. Many families in school community will be reached.	I. Some families not now involved will be reached.	I. Project will involve only the usual suspects.
	II. Project will engage at least one-third of school families.	II. Project will have some personal contact with about one-third of families.	II. Project will get information to some families.	II. Information is hit-or-miss.
	III. Families most in need are main target.	III. Families most in need are part of target group.	III. No special effort to reach families most in need.	III. Families most in need not part of strategy.
	IV. Project will reach families not now involved.	IV. Outreach strategy will work with most families.	IV. Outreach strategies are traditional (fliers, newsletter).	IV. No outreach.
3. Will the project have a lasting impact?	I. Activities will extend at least two years.	I. Some activities will last two years.	I. Activities will last one year.	I. Project is a single event or product.
	II. Events scheduled at least three times during school year, with activities in between. All key players involved.	II. Events will happen three times during first school year. Some key players involved.	II. One or two events, with some activity between. Only a few people are responsible.	II. Project is very dependent on one or two people.
	III. Project will be adopted by school. There is a plan for making that happen.	III. Project will probably be accepted by the schoo.	III. School is not committed to continuing the project.	III. School leaders are not interested in project.

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A Spring Trio of Promising Partnership Practices

Following, are three examples of partnership practices that schools can use to link families and the community to children's learning during the spring, summer, or fall. They come from members of the National Network of Partnership Schools, a research-based group of schools nationwide dedicated to improving children's learning though family-community-school partnerships. About 50 Wisconsin schools and districts are Network members, and Wisconsin was one of six charter state members of the Network, directed by Dr. Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

For more ideas, visit the National Network of Partnership Schools' Web site at www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000. For membership information, contact DPI: Jane Grinde (608-266-9356 or grindjl@mail.state.wi.us) or Ruth Anne Landsverk (608-266-9757 or landsra@mail.state.wi.us), or visit the DPI Partnership Team Web site at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlcl/bbfcsp/.

Hold a Summer Learning Fair

Yes, schools *can* help parents keep children meaningfully engaged in a variety of learning and recreational activities during the summer months! The parent-teacher organization of one elementary school invited parents to attend a Summer Learning Fair one April evening to learn about programs and activities available for children during the summer.

Just before the New Year, the group's planning committee invited community organizations to present summer program information to parents at an April Summer Learning Fair. The community groups responded very favorably and, in February, were mailed registration information.

The PTO publicized the event by providing information to local newspapers and sending fliers home with students. At the Summer Learning Fair, parents received:

- a list of organizations offering summer learning programs and a map of the school showing the locations of that evening's presenters,
- a 10-minute welcome and orientation for parents, and
- a choice of eight 10-minute sessions parents could choose to attend during the evening.

Each organization met with parents in a separate classroom, and no registrations were permitted that evening. Summer learning presentations included sailing lessons, Nature Center camp programs, school district programs, Boy and Girl Scouts, public library programs, YMCA programs, and more.

Expenses were kept to a minimum, including costs for printing fliers and mailing registrations to 30 organizations. More than 150 parents in a school of 440 students attended, most expressing satisfaction with being able to collect information quickly and efficiently.

Host an Annual Family Involvement Retreat

"A clear sense of goals for the district..." "The district as a whole is headed in the same direction..." "Parents and teachers talked together about critical goals and expectations and figured out ways to achieve them..."

These are just a few of many positive remarks taken from participants' evaluations of one district's annual family involvement retreat. Each of 12 schools in this urban, high-poverty district brings a team consisting of a school administrator, teacher, family advocate, family resource center coordinator, and several parents. Community representatives, the district superintendent, and school board members also participate in this annual day-long conference to strengthen district family involvement goals identified by a district-wide needs assessment survey for parents, students, and staff.

The retreat, held at an easily accessible location, is sponsored by the district's Family Involvement Advisory Council. Through a series of speakers—many recruited from outside the district—and facilitated discussion and planning sessions, participants learn about effective practices, build upon strengths, and pool resources to increase family involvement. Specific goals addressed during the most recent retreat included:

- creating more welcoming schools
- increasing parent visibility, and
- helping parents help their children learn at home, especially through interactive homework.

Breakfast and lunch are served, off-site child care is offered, and a small stipend in the form of a gift certificate to a local grocery chain is mailed in a thank-you note to each attending parent after the conference.

The planning team from each of the district's 12 schools is assigned the task of spreading new information and enthusiasm for change and improvement back in their own buildings. The last retreat cost $1,900 to design and implement and was paid for with Goals 2000 funds.

"The retreat has grown stronger each year since it began in 1995. Not only has it given the whole school district the opportunity to learn and grow as a team, it has served to be an affirmation of why and how parents are vital partners in the education of children," a Title I staff member wrote.

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"Rev Up" with a Start-of-the-Year Rally

One middle school kicked off the first day of school with a special welcome to new students and their families. Although this school used the occasion to welcome two new grade levels into the building, other schools might use a similar event to help new students and their families make the transition from elementary school.

In May, the school's Partnership Action Team decided to sponsor a rally to make the first day of school more comfortable to everyone. Over the summer, each team participant helped plan and organize one aspect of the rally

During the rally, students picked up school schedules, became familiar with lockers and classroom locations, and reunited with old friends. Parents, encouraged to pay school fees before the start of the school year, mingled with teachers, school staff, and representatives of school clubs and organizations in a relaxed, festival-like setting. Free refreshments, a disc jockey, and raffle prizes were also featured. Returning students served as volunteer guides, and many school, civic, and business organizations provided volunteers, financial support, leadership, and raffle donations.

Families representing over 75% of the school population attended, and most parents responding to surveys were pleased with the smooth start of the school year. For next year's rally, the school plans to add student escorts to help new families find lockers and classrooms, post more signs and school maps, and hold the event for a longer time.

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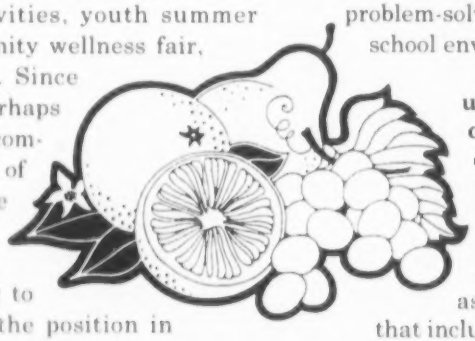
Partnership Potluck

1997-98 Partnership Schools Link to Student Learning

How did Wisconsin Partnership Schools spend their 1997-98 grants? Schools found many creative ways to use last year's $2,000 grant to promote partnerships, connect to school improvement goals, and link to student learning. Here are a few examples, as summarized by the schools in their year-end reports:

Tiffany Creek Elementary School in the Boyceville School District used funds to jump-start a **Community Education Coordinator** position to organize parenting programs, senior citizen activities, youth summer recreation programs, a community wellness fair, and other classes for all ages. Since implementing this position, "perhaps the most notable change in our community has been the willingness of the village board to contribute money and office space for this position," Principal Delesa Boley wrote. The district is planning to continue to fund and expand the position in collaboration with the Village Board.



The Cornell School District sponsored **two community forums** to designate and plan short-term and long-term goals. Participants attending the second forum voted to focus on character education and incorporate it into the K-12 curriculum. The Affirmative Communication Team (ACT) Committee, originally established to improve school-family communications, agreed to oversee implementing the character education initiative, Partnership Coordinator Julie Kosher wrote.

Stettin Elementary School in the Wausau School District focused on achieving twin goals of **including more Southeast Asian families in school activities** and **bringing all volunteers together** to collaborate for students. Stettin used grant funds to hire a parent liaison who spoke both English and Hmong who worked to involve all parents in designing and implementing a school plan to encourage positive student behaviors.

Theresa Learning Community in the Lomira School District focused on using the whole community to **foster care and concern for others** among students, Principal Vikki Kunstman reported. School committees, the parent-teacher group, school volunteers, and school staff built a developmental assets model—designating 40 "building blocks"—and used conflict resolution and other problem-solving techniques to help develop a caring school environment, including in sports programs.

Brillion High School focused on using new technology to improve communication about school goals, classes, and activities with families and the community. High school students produce and air video broadcasts about their school on community cable television. The school also purchased assignment notebooks for every student that includes school rules and the school calendar; set up a parent and community education section in the public library, and sponsored four goal-setting sessions for parents of incoming ninth graders

The Whitewater School District expanded its community-school volunteer program to include all school buildings this year. As a result, **each school in the district now has a volunteer coordinator assigned to it**, including the high school and middle school. Grant funds supported volunteer coordinator stipends. Each coordinator is paid $3,000 annually to organize the more than 1,300 people who volunteered in Whitewater schools for a total of more than 12,000 hours in 1997-98. Included among volunteers are students at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, senior citizens, and employees of local businesses who are encouraged to volunteer each month during the workday.